



# PINAYS TALK TECH - EPISODE 1

## AUDIO TRANSCRIPT

**Renee:** Hello, and welcome to the very first episode of Pinays Talk Tech podcast, the podcast for future forward Filipinas. My name is Renee from Accenture Philippines. Your host for this podcast series. Join me as we engage in lively conversations with Pinays in technology.

From young innovators to industry leaders, this podcast will show you how Pinays in tech are leading through change. This is Pinays Talk Tech podcast. Brought to you by Accenture. Our first guest on the pod is someone who embodies the very purpose of technology. To solve problems, uplift communities, and ultimately makes society a better place. She has a master's degree from a prominent university in Australia.

She has also worked in public service where she spent years advancing the cause of SMEs through a reputable non-profit organization. After her stay in public service, she eventually found her way into the tech industry where she's now starting to make a name for herself. Let's find out how she's doing and how she's using her multifaceted background to empower communities through tech.

Please. Welcome to the show Mina Akram.

**Mina Akram:** Thanks.

**Renee:** Hi Mina, it's been a while. So I, I want us to kind of get into the groove. I'm going to start with some quick-fire questions and also I'll see parts of you that I didn't know before. Ready?

**Mina Akram:** Okay.

**Renee:** Team Sinigang or Adobo?.

**Mina Akram:** Sinigang

**Renee:** Who is your favorite nineties musician?

**Mina Akram:** I listen to a lot of boy bands before, like mga back street boys ganon, but nothing specific.

**Renee:** So I want to be cool and say some of those acoustic bands those like grunge bands. But in no way, spice girls.

**Mina Akram:** Ah,

**Renee:** And so the last one is what did you discover about yourself in the last year of isolation?

Did some things surprise you about yourself?

**Mina Akram:** Yeah. certainly, I think one of the things that I have discovered is. I can do a lot more. If I try to like really allocate a portion of my time to specific things that I need to do in a day, I think I can do more because before I think I spend so much, we spend so much time traveling and, chatting with one another that we don't realize that, maybe we can allot those portion of our time to doing something else.

But now that I'm doing a lot of things, I'm discovering that I'm not getting any younger. So I tend to, to get too sleepy at night or like I lose a lot of energy in a day.

**Renee:** But did you, ever think in just four short years, you will win a technology innovation contest?

**Mina Akram:** No, to be honest because, it's not really my top priority, so I'm more of like a creative is probably a more creatives person so I tend to play with words, like with colors. So that's my personality, but winning an innovation contest, a very technical one. Is nothing that I really dream of.

**Renee:** Yeah, but then you actually did it. And



for those who are listening, maybe you can share a bit about your background and why that's astonishing.

**Mina Akram:** Okay. So um, I graduated with a degree in mass communication. So I studied in Far Eastern University, which is a university in Manila. So I did take up mass comm and during that time there was no specialization. So we had to study different aspects of communication so I did a bit of theater, radio production.

So a little bit of everything, but master of none. And after graduating from college I worked with a television production company and they produced the longest running television, noontime showing the Philippines which is Eat Bulaga so I think that was, that was my first exposure or validation of the course that I did in college.

But I think production is not really for me because it's very demanding. I work six hours, six days a week, I work six days a week. And it's very, very tiring because we're doing the shows live every day. So I had to do a career shift and I applied to an NGO it's called Go Negosyo. So that's where my passion for MSMEs or MSME development started.

So I did Go Negosyo and then I eventually joined government after that, really focusing on policy work this time around, but same beneficiary, MSME. In the country. And then after we met in 2016, I did a break, so I resigned from my job and because I got the scholarship I'm from Australia onwards and I was lucky enough to be sent to Melbourne, to study master of entrepreneurship and innovation.

So I had that little bit of innovation background. And then when I went back to the Philippines, I did rejoin government for a year. So during that time, it was the national elections the 2019 national elections. Unfortunately, the person I was supporting in the election didn't win. That's why I had to find a job.

And that's where Accenture came in.

**Renee:** What were you, what was in your mind at the time? Was it scary moving to a Tech Career? Cause it looks like you have this history of jumping from one career to another which is

excellent, but tech is like totally different. So what were your concerns at the time and how did you get over them?

**Mina Akram:** Actually, I was just like scared the entire time of the process from, me passing or sending my resume to her email until the time that I was interviewed until the time that I was fixing my documents to be, onboarded in the company.

But initially I just wanted to have a change of environment. Because I was, so much exposed with development and government work for the longest time.

And one thing that really made, me really jump into the technology company specifically, Accenture was the job security part and ever since I was a kid or I was in college, I was always fascinated in tech, but I'm not the same technical at the same technical level of the people who work for Accenture.

Like the developers that we have. So like I would, tinker on things. I would like download the software and explore. I learned Photoshop on my own. I didn't have like proper training, but you know, ever since I would want to be involved in something that involves technology. So I think that was really the motivation, when I joined Accenture, but and so far I'm loving it.

**Renee:** Yes. That's what I wanna hear. How long have you been in Accenture now?

**Mina Akram:** I started in Accenture in August, 2019, so it's almost like. Almost 2 years this year, and then half of that period was spent during the quarantine period here at home.

**Renee:** Did you have like perceptions of going to a tech company and were any of those broken or reaffirmed, nearly two years later?

**Mina Akram:** I think generally it's more of you know, my perceptions about. The corporate life because I've never had an experience ever since I started joining the workforce. So I started with a television production company then an NGO then government. So I never had any structured employment like you know, something that we have right now.



So that's one and one thing that I can say is this, there's just a lot of processes. Like I deal with like day-to-day processes but I also appreciate the order that it brings, everything is so organized. So well-planned that, once things, once things get stuck in a certain period, in a certain portion of the task.

It's easier to like, go back and investigate what happened compared to working for an institution, like an NGO or government where everything is decided like upfront and, there's no specific process to document everything. Sometimes it's easy to lose in the process. Yeah.

**Renee:** Yeah, I find that really interesting because I think in the space that you are at right now, it's so established.

And you have so many projects that you have to run at scale that not having those processes, people will lose their way and that's how you cultivate like the quality of the work done. So yeah, I totally understand the love-hate relationship. What do you enjoy the most about tech?

Did you? Because I know we have a lot of these learning materials where we talk about the, how to understand blockchain. What is Agile? Was that weird to you? Or do you feel now you're acclimated that. Yeah, I can talk. I understand what blockchain is. How are you like with your tech savviness from when you joined to now?

**Mina Akram:** Oh I'm still learning to be honest um, I think, it's not enough time for me to absorb everything that I need to know, but I think being tech, I realize that you can't always predict because you can't always predict what's going to happen next because it's constantly evolving and growing and it's happening so fast.

So like sometimes. I get to learn something and then the next day it's outdated already. So you have to, to be fast as well. And to keep up with what's happening around you and I think being strategic forward thinker will really help you get along with the demands and to appreciate the beauty of technology and innovation.

So I think on that side, I think I have the skills to be, to think strategically so that I'll be able to keep up with the demands.

**Renee:** And I think it's the, technology's the least boring job, because exactly, as you said, not only does it change all the time. It's in every industry, every business is a digital business now you can't specially when the pandemic hit everybody thought, huh? Wait, I need to adapt. Yeah. And so now there's no excuse and which is great for companies like us. You know, speaking of the different, kind of passion projects that you have, right? Because to me, a person who's been through NGO and is helping government, a person, as young as you are, there has to be a lot of the passion to serve there.

Which were you ever worried that you would lose that in a corporate setting? And maybe you can tell us about how you live that right now while having a corporate job.

**Mina Akram:** When I moved to technology initially it was hard because I was trying to get along with the demands of the job. And the requirements and I was trying to understand how the developers think because that's needed for me to understand where should I position them to help them in their career growth. So initially it was just like me looking after myself and trying to understand the job that I am in. But once I got comfortable and I realized that I had the support, all the support that I need for everything that I want to do, and I want to happen.

So you have this opportunity to introduce something new. So thankfully It was last year that I learned about Ideas to Outcome, which is the internal Accenture competition wherein people are encouraged to submit ideas, I have this idea, or like we have this idea, a simple program of helping capacitate the micro small enterprises, particularly women, because there are a lot of Nanays, small businesses. We teach them how to survive in a new normal, because most of them don't know how to navigate through the online selling space.

We've interviewed a couple of them and we have learned that even some of them don't know how to use GCash, so the idea is to provide them with capacity development sessions, for them to learn the fundamentals and, everything that they need to know to set up their business, and at the same time provide the platform for them.



That's not as complicated as the known e-commerce sites like Lazada and Shopee but at the same time, providing them with additional market that can potentially reach new customers. So yeah. That's basically it I, I stay out of base, but yeah,

**Renee:** It shows, it shines through me that I think that certainly people who are listening to that would just nod their head and, oh this girl has fire under her that wants to make this happen.

And so, it won in the Philippines. You also got on the podium for the global contest, which is incredible because we're half a million, Accenture, people around the world and being on the podium is no small feat, my friend. So, you know, I thought that was amazing. But now you actually are following through with that, aren't you?

**Mina Akram:** The ideas to outcome competition and me and our team winning the Philippine competition eventually representing the Philippines in the global stage is sort of a validation for someone like me without a tech background that I can exist in any industry.

Yeah. As long as you're willing to learn, as long as, you know, you find the right connections for yourself with the right knowledge and you get the support that you need, you can excel. So I would just like to highlight that, but going back to your question of transitioning that idea into a reality,

**Renee:** how do you do your work-life balance is clearly here.

Launching a new e-commerce site. Again, that's like a startup company that you need people to run that. How do you balance that with your work for you Mina, what is your definition of, a work-life balance?

**Mina Akram:** I think initially I started with having this conversation with my leads that I am doing something else, aside from my usual, day-to-day jobs or tasks. So that was one, it was clear that I had the support from the leadership team. So that's one getting assurance and support from my leads. Second is having that mindset. That you can't always work all the time.

Sometimes you have to sacrifice, not replying to chats and messages, even from your senior managers, just to be able to address, areas that you love, because that will fuel you back to answer those messages. Once you get back into your work. So that's number two. I always, I always set aside time in a day to answer questions on a personal, my personal engagements, syempre, all things comes with sacrifice.

So I think one of the major sacrifices lately is I haven't been getting... I'm getting enough sleep, but not the longer sleep that I used to have before. Now I sleep like probably five to six hours in a day. on a work day and then binabawi ko naman siya pag weekend.

So are you sure you get up like two, 2:00 PM on the weekends? Especially on a Sunday. Pag Saturday kasi may Live Lokal sessions kami so usually natutulog ako after the session

Or Sunday matutulog ako so, yeah. And third probably is. Naturally it just fuels me. Um, it comes up as something na hindi siya work for me, like naturally ko nalang siyang gagawin because it makes me happy and at the same time, I know that I'm doing my part for the Philippines because I'm a very nationalistic person.

And so ever since I started working for Go Negosyo, I've always, leave a portion or a part of me dedicated to the Philippines or to, development, the development of the country. And that's something that anyone, any person or any boss can't take away from me. So I think it goes back to your values, say what do you value the most and how does that value affect your life in general?

**Renee:** I think the happiness part is very good, right? Because people, when they think about work-life balance is, I'm only gonna work, eight hours a day. And other than that, I'll do other things, but I feel like if you are able to pursue your passion and also do meaningful work, to me, that's balanced, do you have any advice for you know, women who maybe are tentative in kind of moving to a tech career?

For those who don't understand what a tech company is and feel that if you're not good at



programming, you can't have a tech job, what's your advice for them? Could you maybe give them a peek of what really goes on in a tech company? Cause it's really not just development, right?

**Mina Akram:** Yeah. Remember I mentioned about like technology being so fast and innovations happening you know, in a click you know, in a second, there's innovation already going on. And I think that's where women would fit because naturally we are very driven and we are resolved resourceful diba? Yung mga nanay's very resourceful. Kapag walang ulam, they will really find a way

And for the longest time we are challenged to prove our worth in society, women in general, and hindi na effort sa atin na to give always the extra. Because yun nga, we're proving ourselves. And that's one aspect na kapag meron ka non and most women have. You will thrive in the technology world or in the technology business.

For somebody who is not technologically aligned and now works for a technology company, I can say it surprised me that the setup was very different to what I have imagined. So I imagined like a very nerdy set up where people are just like typing on their keyboards, typing on their keyboards, just looking at the screen for nine hours a day, it's very different there's a lot of strategy going on.

Our work involves a lot of strategy networking, um, thinking about new things and, putting it to action developing new things. So if you're not a programmer or you know, a hard core technical person, but you understand how society works, how the industry functions, how the business works, because we deal with a lot of clients then somewhere along the way, you will find a spot within the entire process of delivering something from start to end and delivering excellence for the clients that Accenture has.

**Renee:** Thanks Mina, and I think that's something that people really don't understand.

**Mina Akram:** And everything that I know now was just like, learned from scratch. Like to be honest, Renee. I didn't use excel except for liquidation reports in government. I had to basically account for receipts, but now I'm doing

a lot of Excel formulas.

**Renee:** Are you the master of V Lookup now?

**Mina Akram:** No, hindi parin ako ganon ka master ng V Lookup. But I tried to find a way to make the thing at hand work for me and using my, yung mga old knowledge ko pero hindi pwede kasing ganon eh you need to also adapt with the change and thankfully there are a million of trainings and, anything that you can, you want to learn new, you can find in Accenture, like you want to learn Japanese, there's available Japanese language programs.

You want to learn Spanish. You want to learn how to master PowerPoint, go. There are a lot of trainings and I think that's one thing that I was able to maximize because, I just like. Search on a random thing and thankfully it will provide me with a lot of results. And from there I will turn, I will tend to learn and, gain the knowledge that I needed to be able to apply it to the actual thing that I'm doing right now.

So a lot of the things that I know right now, so I'm very comfortable to where I am right now, but like looking back X months ago, I was just like, a scared person, not a tech-nerdy person. that's always scared to attend meetings because I feel like I will not understand anything at all, even the terminologies and the jargons that you are using.

But I think you just need to allow yourself some time to learn and be eager to, search for the things that would complement or complement the things that you already know. Then you'll be able to survive.

**Renee:** No. I, I love that because Accenture is quite obsessive about enabling people like okay.

You have I have to read through this, another learning board, really. But to me, it's like a privilege to actually have that and you don't know. You don't know what you don't know. And I think, as you said, you will get the support that you need. I've never been in any situation. Whether in, when I was in the U S when I was working for Accenture in the US or here, but there's always somebody who's going to be there to hold your hand through it.





And then once you're ready, let you go right. What I love most what you said about no, you're now doing a lot of Excel formulas and my girl that's programming.

**Mina Akram:** There's actually programming an Excel sheet. I didn't know that, I can understand, I can now read like a table, like I already use tables in production, so...

**Renee:** Good job I'm so yes, you understand the table in production, Yes!

Mina, what's next for you?

**Mina Akram:** I think in Accenture there's, endless possibilities, there's so much opportunities for people like me and like for the rest of the population, even those who have been with Accenture for the longest time can never know what's ahead of them.

Because, um, a lot of new things are happening. There's exciting programs that you can join um, opportunities, everywhere in terms of like progression. I also want to experience a lot of new things. Like probably managing a project, like officially, um, dealing with a client that's not internally within Accenture.

Something that I would want to learn as well. And at the same time, I think, I love speaking to a lot of younger people, so I, want to have more opportunities like that, um, being able to share my story as someone from government, now existing and, talking through meetings wherein they discuss the technological architecture and implementation and things like that.

And probably inspire more, who's afraid. Who's still intimidated in terms of exploring a career with us. So maybe I'll be able to inspire them to try.

**Renee:** Hopefully thank you that you are in this podcast because I do think this is going to inspire a lot of women and say, huh maybe I can thrive there.

When you think you certainly have in two years, less than two years, she won the biggest innovation contest in the company. So you know, that is something to be very proud of. I am so thrilled for you. Thank you so much for joining.

**Mina Akram:** Yeah. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you for inviting me. And I was, I hope I was able to share my story and the story of Live Lokal PH.

**Renee:** Yay. Thanks Mina!

**Mina Akram:** Thank you!

**Outro:** Thank you for listening to Pinays Talk Tech podcast brought to you by Accenture. Don't forget to hit subscribe on all major podcast platforms.

Copyright © 2021 Accenture  
All rights reserved.

Accenture and its logo  
are registered trademarks  
of Accenture.